

ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS



Delaware Center for Inland Bays • 302.645.7325 • www.udel.edu/CIB • March 2001

DELAWARE INLAND BAYS

Delaware's Inland Bays are made up of three interconnected water bodies; Rehoboth Bay, Indian River Bay, and Little Assawoman Bay. These bays and their tributaries cover about 32 square miles and drain a 300 square mile watershed. Thousands of visitors enjoy the beaches, boating, sailing, windsurfing, fishing, clamming, hiking, and wildlife watching in the Inland Bays watershed. The watershed's wide array of habitats is home to a large diversity of species that live and breed in the area.

FACTS ABOUT THE ESTUARY

- Almost 30 square miles of the Inland Bays are classified as shellfish water although only 19 are approved for shellfishing. Hard clams and blue crabs are currently the only commercially or recreationally important shellfish.
- Over 60,000 people live in the Inland Bay's watershed. Sussex County's population is expected to increase by 30 percent over the next 20 years and average summer weekend populations are expected to increase 200 percent.
- Watershed land use is 10 percent urban, 44 percent forest, and 32 percent agriculture.
- Recreation and tourism contribute \$250 million annually to the local economy. Boating is a popular activity; marinas and private docks in the Inland Bays shelter 7500 boats.
- Seventy million chickens are produced in the watershed each year. They create 95 tons of manure annually. The estuary provides important habitat for finfish and a stop over for neotropical songbirds.

HEALTH OF THE ESTUARY

- Excess nutrients cause algal blooms that block sunlight from reaching the bottom of the bays thereby decreasing of dissolved oxygen levels.
- Twenty-five percent of total nitrogen entering the bays comes from the atmosphere; point sources account for four percent.
- Septic systems annually discharge as much as 480,000 pounds of nitrogen and 250,000 pounds of phosphorous to the soil.
- Approximately 18,000 septic systems are permitted in the watershed.
- Only 60,000 acres of forest remain in the watershed, most privately owned.
- Fifty-four percent of Delaware's wetlands have been lost since 1780.
- Population increases and nutrient loading in the watershed impact habitat quantity and quality.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ESTUARY PROGRAM

- Preserved and have begun restoring over 150 acres to native hardwood forest.
- The Inland Bays Journal, inserted into local newspapers, reaches over 30,000 Sussex County residents and spreads news of the Bay's problems and solutions.
- Developed pollution-control strategies to meet required Total Maximum Daily Loads for nitrogen and phosphorous in the Inland Bays.
- Logged over 1400 hours of volunteer time in the past two years.
- Erected "Now Entering the Inland Bays Watershed" signs to remind tourists and residents that actions even far away can affect the bays.
- Received \$40,000 grant to construct a Demonstration Oyster Reef in Indian River Bay.
- Over 500 kids, ranging in age from 6 to 12, visited the James Farm Ecological Preserve to participate in extension activities.

Hot Crab Dip

12 oz cream cheese
2 tbl onions, finely chopped
1 lb crab meat
2 tbl milk
1-1/2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
2 tbl horseradish
Cheddar cheese

Soften cream cheese at room temperature. Add milk, Worcestershire sauce, onions and horseradish, mixing well.

Add crab meat, mixing as little as possible to keep from breaking up the crab chunks. Spoon into a casserole. Sprinkle with cheese.

Bake at 350 for 25 to 30 minutes until hot and bubbly.

Keep warm and serve with plenty of Ritz crackers.